

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

You may be interested in reading the attached piece from Encounter before meeting your British friends.

It is a round-up and analysis of British press reaction to Cuba.



Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

# THE PRESS

## The Week of Cuba

"Confusion now hath made his masterpiece..."  
*Macbeth* (ii, iii)

THE STORY of the "Siege Perilous"<sup>1</sup> began one day early last October when information was received in Washington about certain new military installations in Cuba. Orders were given to obtain "more details," but the first reports were apparently inconclusive. Hurricane "Ella" made further reconnaissance impossible for a few days. Then on October 14th the U-2s flew again and the photographs revealed that rocket ramps had been built and that Soviet medium-range missiles were already in Cuba. The next evening Secretary of Defence McNamara was informed, and on the 16th the President was put in the picture. Two days later, on October 18th, Andrey Gromyko, the Soviet foreign minister, called at the White House for a protracted talk: he told Mr. Kennedy that Russia had supplied "only defensive weapons" to Cuba. On Friday a series of high-level talks began in Washington; in Florida naval and air force units were being amassed. A news black-out was imposed on Sunday, but in the course of Monday it became known that "a very important statement" was soon to be made. At 7.00 on Monday local time (mid-night European time) President Kennedy announced a naval blockade of Cuba as a first step to stop the build-up of medium-range missiles; this

<sup>1</sup> Richard Rovere, writing from Washington in *The New Yorker* (3 Nov.): "The President said in his address to the nation that his first knowledge of the new and dangerous developments in Cuba had been brought to him on Tuesday, October 16th, at nine in the morning. From then until last Sunday, he managed to carry on without betraying any sense of an impending ordeal... On one occasion, though, he expressed an uncharacteristic sentiment in a characteristic way. In the afternoon of the day he received the first intelligence reports, he met with a group of newspaper and broadcasting people who were in Washington for some conferences organised by the State Department. At the conclusion of a short and rather routine talk on foreign policy, he said there came to his mind a poem by a Spaniard named Ortega that had been translated by Robert Graves. The text he recited was:

Bullfights critics ranked in rows  
 Crowd the enormous Plaza full;  
 But only one is there who knows  
 And he's the man who fights the bull.

Ortega is Domingo Ortega, a bullfighter. The poem appeared in the British monthly *Encounter* in December 1951. Robert Graves quoted it as reflecting his feelings when he won the Oxford Chair of Poetry, a position he said might be called "Siege Perilous...."

7a

blockade was to apply only to war material. This decision had been taken after it had become known that missiles that were capable of hurling one megaton each—roughly fifty times the destructive power of the Hiroshima bomb—at U.S. sites were now located in Cuba and those for launching five-megaton missiles were under construction.

The news reached the British press at midnight, Monday, October 22nd, very late for comment in next morning's edition. But, as Michael Foot's left-wing *Tribune* remarked:

I'm glad to say that those which did [comment] were not fooled by Kennedy's manoeuvres. I praise the *Daily Herald* particularly.... Even the *Daily Telegraph* was not happy about the move.... And the *Guardian* slammed the Americans....

The *Herald* in its first comment pressed for "irrefutable proof":

Even if the bases ARE in fact being built, President Kennedy surely would have done better if he had first reported this to the UN Security Council....

The *Telegraph*, too, thought that the United Nations and the Organisation of American States should have been informed and America's allies consulted:

He [President Kennedy] has surprised more than his enemies by the announcement which he made last night.

The *Guardian* was perhaps most critical of all. It doubted whether the blockade would be effective (for the Russians could easily establish an airlift) and

... if Mr. Khrushchev has really begun to build offensive missile bases in Cuba he has done so primarily to demonstrate to the U.S. and the world the meaning of American bases close to the Soviet frontier.

The *Guardian* editorial writer reminded its readers, many of whom were surely aware of the fact, that Turkey had a common frontier with the Soviet Union and he believed that Mr. Khrushchev thought (with some reason) that the effect of what was being done in Cuba would be to weaken America's foothold in Western Europe; "what is good for Cuba is saucy also for Turkey." The *Guardian* ended with these predictions:

The effects of President Kennedy's action may well be felt long after the American elections next month.... In the end the United States may find that it has done its cause, its friends, and its own true interests little good.

The *Daily Worker*, somewhat more predictably, came out with a "hands off Cuba" appeal:

His [Kennedy's] excuse for this act of a bully won't bear a minute's examination.

Only the *Evening Standard* and the *Daily Express* said in their leading articles that President Kennedy would find "full understanding and sympathy" in Britain. The *Standard* did not believe the Turkey argument had "much relevance" in this context and added that no serious military action was likely to be taken by the Russians in Cuba.

ON WEDNESDAY, American armed forces all over the globe had been alerted; so was the Cuban army. The Organisation of American States approved President Kennedy's action. The Security Council was convened, a declaration of the Soviet government was published, and the blockade came into force.

There was not, however, much evidence of the "sympathy and understanding" in the British press which some papers had predicted the day before. True enough, the *Telegraph* disposed of the Security Council argument: "It affords no guarantee that even the most justified American complaint would be impartially or thoroughly redressed." It also rejected the Cuba/Turkey parallel. After all, this was a fresh threat and the balance of power was very precarious anyway: "There are limits to what the West can afford to tolerate."

This line was also taken by the *Times*—something had to be done, but the *Times* ended on a rather pessimistic note:

In spite of all the differences in Russia's and America's records and motives... there is just enough similarity in the siting of some of the bases to cause the question to be raised... they may consider a bargain whereby each does away with a forward base or two.

The *Herald* put it very bluntly in an editorial headed "KENNEDY'S SUEZ." Kennedy was compared to Sir Anthony Eden on several counts: he had no excuse to "go it alone" and he had no real reason to complain because

Khrushchev has taken no warlike action against these bases in Britain, Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey and Pakistan... Castro could equally claim that any Soviet bases in Cuba are defensive....

Mr. Walter Lippmann, whose U.S. column is published in the *Herald*, wrote in a similar vein: "Turkey is a great liability in our relations with Cuba." The *Worker* called Kennedy's report about rocket bases in Cuba "farcical, fantastic, without a shadow of proof," and said his action was "without parallel since Hitler's tirades against Czechoslovakia." Mr. Harold Wilson (appearing on TV) protested against the American blockade and the fact that Britain had not been consulted, and went on to press more parallels with Suez.

In the popular press, the *Sketch* called Prime Minister Macmillan to order ("This is no time for sabres, Mac") while the *Mirror* thought that President Kennedy had acted courageously:

But whether this drastic answer to the Soviet challenge is as wise as it is courageous is open to grave doubt.

<sup>2</sup> Sir William Hayter (former British Ambassador in Moscow) wrote in *The Observer* (11 November): "... There never was any danger of the Soviet Government starting an atomic war for Cuba. In saying this I am not being wise after the event; I said it in a broadcast on the second day of the Crisis, and if it was obvious even to me it must have been still more obvious to Mr. Kennedy and his advisers...."

The *Guardian* continued to discuss the future of bases and stressed what it thought were some very awkward considerations. After all, if the Thor rocket sites in East Anglia and the Polaris installations in Holy Loch were defensive, couldn't the same be claimed for the Russian fishing port in the Caribbean?

... the argument has some strength and it will be hard to resist in the United Nations. By imposing a blockade the Americans have played into Khrushchev's hands.

The *Express* claimed "BRITAIN MUST BE THERE" (that is, at a meeting between Russian and U.S. leaders). Its defence correspondent was one of the very few who felt sure that a nuclear conflict would be avoided.<sup>3</sup> The only other such voice was again the *Evening Standard* who called it a "remote possibility" and thought that it was a good thing that the West had for once gained the offensive—it would strengthen its bargaining position and would ensure that Mr. Khrushchev would not misjudge the spirit of America over Berlin.

By Wednesday, then, a fairly clear pattern had emerged and one ought to pause therefore for a moment or two. A considerable section of public opinion (as reflected in the press) showed an almost total lack of understanding of the causes and the character of the crisis (a week later there were mild agonies of revisionism), and consequently came up with ideas for its solution that were at best, irrelevant.

Comparatively easy to understand was the "better-red-than-dead" school of thought, based as it is on the (undeniable) assumption that the results of nuclear war are too horrible to imagine and that Britain in particular is more exposed than most. It could be argued that "while there's life there's hope" (hope, for instance, that totalitarian Communism would "mellow" at some future date and change "from within" into a more humane system). As things are, the balance of power between West and East, whether likeable or not, has clearly been proving itself over the years as the best available guarantee against world war (for the time being). By weakening the West, by preaching the virtues of ambiguity and irresolution, would not the prospects of war increase, not decrease? It is conceivable that a very strong military power could remain neutral in a global conflict; but neutrality *per se*, especially if coupled with military weakness, is a very dangerous thing indeed. One hardly needed to labour the point in the Cuban week—events in India were already speaking for themselves. Hence the oft-marked paradox that it is the most militant "enemies of the bomb" in the West who, contrary to their peace-worthy intentions, actually enhance the possibility of thermo-nuclear war. Yet even if the West capitulated, if Lord Russell somehow succeeded in converting the Pentagon and the White House to his views, would the dangers of nuclear war be over? Would it not simply leave the field free, not for one world state but for the sovereign Communist super-powers to settle their conflicts between themselves in a vastly enlarged thermo-nuclear

theatre of war? War between Russia and China would be more than a mere possibility once the "common danger" had been removed. There is far more missionary zeal in Moscow and Peking than in the capitals of the West. Mao and his friends (as Mr. Kardelj tells us) envisage with a large measure of equanimity the loss of several hundred million Chinese in order to make the world safe for the only true doctrine.

It is perhaps unfair to submit the tenets of the "better-red-than-dead school" of thought to rational examination; after all, it is not a rational theory but an emotional reaction, the expression of very real fear. And as Burke once put it, "No passion so effectively robs the mind of all its power of acting and reasoning as fear...."

**M**ORE difficult to understand are the milder forms of mental aberration that occurred during that critical week in October, 1962. The tendency to equate America and Russia on every occasion can perhaps be explained against the general background of irritable anti-Americanism. More disconcerting for political observers was the failure to realise that for the Soviet leaders "peaceful co-existence" and "cold war" are but two sides of the same coin. The Soviet state is taken to be a kind of "traditional power," as if its foreign political goals and ambitions are limited, rather than extravagantly based on a belief in their global historical mission. This is the usual projection on Soviet and Communist policy of the empirical British approach.

The assumption is that somehow the world conflict concerns only Washington and Moscow, that other countries (such as Britain) have really nothing to do with it and should not be "drawn" into it. Was not the cold war the product of "professional cold warriors" on both sides? Could not men of good-will easily sort out the difficulties? If only the Security Council or the General Assembly were called upon to deal with the conflict! If only Kennedy and Khrushchev would meet face to face and thrash out their conflicts and misunderstandings!

This confusion probably found its most striking expression in the attempt to draw a parallel between Cuba and Turkey. It may take some time for the élite in a recently independent African or Asian country to adjust themselves to the realities of world politics. After all, this is a new and strange experience to people who in the past have mainly been preoccupied with domestic affairs. Nor, perhaps, should one be too critical of the good people who, at the height of the crisis, wrote letters to the newspapers to the effect that legally, morally, and ethically "Kennedy's action was indefensible" and that Khrushchev was "equally entitled" to blockade Berlin or invade Turkey or whatever else he might care to do. Most of them undoubtedly meant well. But what was one to think of professional commentators who at this critical time revealed in their articles that they had apparently never heard that politics were mainly concerned with power, that there was such a thing as a "balance of power," and that in the intensely contemporary power-politics there were few "rights," but at best certain "rules of the game." Mr. Irving Kristol, in

7a

an article published in the New York *New Leader*, a week before the Cuban crisis, anticipated much of the confusion that was to ensue:

The trouble with those who flaunt those formal geographical analogies [between Cuba and Turkey] is that they ignore the existence of the Cold War. The world is not a single community and there is no supreme juridical sovereignty to define and allocate the rights of nations. In the conditions of cold war, one must take it for granted that each side will seize every opportunity to exercise its rights (as it sees them) to the best of its ability. Neither conscience nor reason prescribes that, each time we score a gain, we must figure out a way to suffer a corresponding loss. Such a prescription would amount to nothing more than a rough-and-ready way of losing....

Curious, that though Turkey was so often mentioned, Finland never was. In the *Paris Figaro*, Professor Raymond Aron pointed out that historically this parallel was much closer since Finland had been at one time part of the Russian empire just as Cuba had been part of the American, whereas Turkey had always been independent. Russia had of course no "right" to regard Finland as part of its sphere of influence; this was just part of the rules of the cold war as set by Moscow. These rules provide that Communism will make a forward move from time to time which must not be resisted by the West; if, on the other hand, the people of a certain country revolt against their Communist overlords (as in Hungary, for instance; or perhaps to-morrow in East Germany) the West must on no account help them. These rules of Russian chess (or roulette) have the doubtless advantage that they will inevitably lead to a Communist victory. Public opinion in some countries has become so accustomed to them that the American refusal to abide by them and to prefer their own set (adapted perhaps from their national game of poker at which they are more adept) provoked painéd surprise and moral indignation in many circles. Even some of those who conceded that the Americans had "quite a good case" hesitated to support it.

**T**HURSDAY: Khrushchev has been to the opera, after having sent a letter to Kennedy. The Security Council deliberates. A Russian military attaché in Washington declares that the Russian ships will go through, but later messages suggest that some of them have changed course. U Thant cables Khrushchev and Kennedy asking them respectively to stop work on the rocket installations and to lift the blockade.

Mr. J. E. Mortimer of Twickenham writes a letter to the *Times* to the effect that America's action is wrong and very dangerous; Mr. S. Bremons of 82 Clare Court says that "President Kennedy's speech last night must fill sane men with horrified forebodings.... The whole affair smacks of electioneering and is in any case irresponsible... plain hypocrisy...." Mr. Michael Raeside of Stanmore, Middlesex, writing to the *Herald*, is shocked by the American action not because it is morally wrong but because it is so obviously wrong

that it is plain stupid: "They have played right into the hands of the Russians." Mr. J. Hart of Russell Road, Kensington, writing to the same paper, says that the U.S.A. has "forced her atomic bases" on Turkey, Western Germany, and also Britain. "It is therefore hard to understand or sympathise with her hysterical terror over Cuba." Sixty professors and other academic staff, headed by Professor David Glass (sociologist, London) sent the Prime Minister a letter saying it was imperative that Britain should "refuse to be drawn into a world conflict over Cuba."<sup>1</sup> A baby in a pram pushed by its parents headed a "No War Over Cuba" march through Leicester by 140 university students. The sixth form at Midhurst Grammar School, Sussex, on strike for the second day, declared that whether or not it would continue its studies on Thursday depended on the situation. The *Daily Telegraph* had by now swung around to support Kennedy, though it noted that the "grave concern" at the American action expressed in the Labour Party statement was widely shared. *The Times* said the main problem now was "to

<sup>1</sup> "The United States' action against Cuba, whatever the truth of President Kennedy's allegations, opens what threatens to be the first phase of World War III. At this moment of extreme crisis, it is imperative for the people of Britain and for Her Majesty's Government to state in the plainest terms that they will refuse to be drawn into a world conflict on this issue."

Among the signers were A. J. Ayer, T. B. Bottomore, Dorothy Cole, H. J. Eysenck, Meyer Fortes, Hilde Himmelweit, Nicholas Kaldor, Peter Laslett, Charles Madge, Joan Robinson, A. J. P. Taylor, Richard Titmuss, Raymond Williams.

Several days later a number of professors and lecturers at London University deplored the impression created that "University opinion in this country is willing at the first sign of crisis to attribute the worst of motives to the United States." Among the signers: Hugh Seton-Watson, H. C. Ailen, Julius Gould, Leonard Schapiro, Agnes Headlam-Morley.

When it became known that the Glass statement had actually been signed by some 600 members of University staffs, the Battle of the Petitions continued in the correspondence columns of the *Times*: "... This statement has been widely assumed to reflect the opinion of university teachers in general. As there are more than 12,000 university teachers in this country, the number of signatures is evidence rather of the energy of the statement's promoters than of any widespread acceptance of its contents. We fully support the right of individual citizens who are university teachers to express their opinions on this or other political issues. But we trust that it will not be assumed, either at home or abroad, that this minority is representative of the profession as a whole."

This letter (12 November) was signed by (among others): Alan Bullock, A. L. P. Norrington, John Sparrow, Max Beloff, Roy Harrod, Robert Blake, Donald Macrae, Michael Howard, Norman Cohn, and Martin Wight.

find a way by which both sides can extricate themselves with some honour saved." Paul Johnson in the *Evening Standard* announced that Mr. Khrushchev had "... conceded diplomatic defeat—perhaps the biggest in his career—but this was a lonely and somewhat premature voice. Both the *Express* and the *Mirror*, broadly supporting Kennedy, came out in favour of a "personal meeting" in which (the *Express* said) Macmillan could play an important part. The Turkey theme was further developed in a *Guardian* editorial: if the Russians wanted to dislodge the West from Berlin, no agreement was likely, but

if their intended prize is the bases in Britain and Turkey then something might be done. . . . As a first step it might be arranged that the Soviet bases in Cuba and the American missile stations in Turkey are dismantled simultaneously under UN supervision.

Walter Lippmann in a column in the *Herald* supported the same proposal: "The two bases could be dismantled without altering the world balance of power. . . ." Mr. Lippmann also chided Kennedy for not having confronted Gromyko the week before with the evidence on Soviet bases, thus having "suspended diplomacy."

A severe attack on President Kennedy came from Lord Altrincham in the *Guardian*. He found "fatal similarities" between the American President and Mr. Anthony Eden ("like Eden he is vain, ambitious, fundamentally lacking self-confidence . . . driven into an orgy of demagogic"). Kennedy had fallen into a trap, and small wonder Khrushchev had gone to the opera.

As for the *Daily Worker*, it continued to pour scorn on the alleged evidence about Soviet bases in Cuba:

... an act of madness unequalled in modern times. Having seen these pictures it is obvious why the U.S. did not consult its allies before it plunged the world into this terribly dangerous situation. For only the lowest of toadies would have agreed in advance to support the U.S. proposal of risking nuclear war because of photographs such as these.

In many of the British commentaries there was a tone of strong suspicion that the photographic evidence had been contrived or doctored for "a gullible American audience." In fact, as the New York *Herald Tribune* revealed (November 1st), the photographs were actually released first in London by U.S. Ambassador David Bruce after he had been urged to do so by Prime Minister Macmillan "to help convince British public opinion. . . ." According to Mark Arnold Forster, the *Observer's* political correspondent, "The Ambassador, by all accounts, left the Prime Minister angry, depressed, and uneasy. . . . No one tried at all to conceal the Government's resentment. Britain, it was emphasised, was carrying no cans for Kennedy, not this time anyway. . . ." He added (October 28th):

There are still nostalgic feelings in some parts of Whitehall for the stately days of Ike, the days when the man at the other end of the White

House telephone (if he wasn't playing golf) was an old and trusted colleague, who had commanded armies instead of a motor-torpedo-boat. Did these young men, it was being asked on Tuesday, know what they were doing?... It [the Cabinet] just hasn't trusted Kennedy-on-Cuba since the melancholy episode of the landing at the Bay of Pigs...."

The *Worker* cited Emanuel Shinwell and Fenner Brockway for their denunciation of the U.S. action as a breach of the UN charter. Mrs. Ruby A. Ord of 114 Dartmouth Road (in a letter to the *Evening Standard*) wanted to know exactly what the difference was between American and Russian arms. The "Mothers Against War" organisation sent a cable to Pope John XXIII (stop KENNEDY now). And Mr. Raymond Challinor from Hindley near Wigan asked (in the *Guardian*), "Can it be that some strange magical power makes American nuclear weapons an agent of peace while Russian nuclear weapons are an agent of war?" Three children at Truleigh Hill, Shoreham, were kept from school, and their father explained (*Herald*) "I feel we should all be together at a dangerous time...."

**O**N FRIDAY, October 26th, *Tribune* wrote:

The debt which the world owes to Bertrand Russell may—if sanity prevails—be greater than anyone thought possible for one man. His dramatic intervention in the Cuban crisis . . . has apparently given the world at least a breathing space.

This opinion was shared to a certain extent by the *Daily Worker*, though other observers considered the effect of his activities was highly problematic.<sup>6</sup> Cassandra, in the *Daily Mirror*, called Lord Russell's activities one of the "ludicrous aspects of the crisis":

He is blatantly anti-American and servilely pro-Communist and in the course of these querulous cables, managed to say that if Khrushchev did what Russell asked him his name would be blessed and that Khrushchev's "continued forbearance was our great hope."

Lord Russell, in the course of a long and distinguished career as a philosopher, has often com-

<sup>6</sup> On October 31st, Mr. Macmillan said in the House of Commons: "As before in great crises, so in this one, there are always the weaker brethren in our midst. Happily they have not prevailed." But it was not clear whether he was referring to brethren in the country or in the Cabinet, or both.

<sup>7</sup> The Oxford historian, A. L. Rowse, writing from Pasadena, California, later challenged Lord Russell's view that mankind owed a "profound debt" to Mr. Khrushchev for agreeing to dismantle the Soviet missiles in Cuba. "But who put them there? By the same argument mankind owes this threat to world peace to Premier Khrushchev for putting them there. So the pronouncement of the famous mathematician cancels out on either side and comes to precisely nothing...." (*Guardian*, November 5th.)

mented on politics. Some of his *obiter dicta* have been truly prophetic—such as his predictions in 1920 about the Soviet Union. On other occasions he has been quite wrong and one can only be thankful in retrospect that his advice was not accepted by Western statesmen—as, for instance, when he called for non-resistance to Hitler in 1938 (*Which Way to Peace*, London, 1938):

When disarmament is suggested it is natural to imagine that foreign conquests would inevitably follow.... This is a mistake as the case of Denmark shows.... [The Danes] are defended by their very defencelessness.... If they [the foreign states] did not [leave us alone] we should have to yield without fighting, and we should therefore not arouse their ferocity. The consequences both to ourselves and the world would be infinitely less terrible than the consequences of a war, even if it ended in complete victory.... If a German were to write a history of our rule in India he would easily establish to the satisfaction of the Germans that our love of democracy is humbug.... I do not say that all this would be just, but it would be no more unjust than the view that many British anti-Fascists have of Germany.

There is an interesting recurrent pattern in Russell's political activities. He could have argued in 1938 (as he could have done again in 1962) that he stood for "non-resistance" regardless of consequences. Instead he preferred, then as now, to belittle the possible effects of a Fascist (or Communist) take-over and to whitewash the totalitarian dictators. At the height of the crisis Lord Russell said he believed "that Mr. Khrushchev replied to him because he recognised that he was genuinely neutral and non-partisan" (*Daily Worker*, October 29th). Not long before this Russell had called the "murderous" Western leaders "worse than Hitler." A comparison of the texts of his cable during the crisis is instructive:

#### To KENNEDY

YOUR ACTION DESPERATE. THREAT TO HUMAN SURVIVAL. NO CONCEIVABLE JUSTIFICATION. CIVILISED MAN CONDEMS IT. WE WILL NOT HAVE MASS MURDER. ULTIMATUM MEANS WAR. I DO NOT SPEAK FOR POWER BUT PEACE FOR CIVILISED MAN. END THIS MADNESS.

#### To KHRUSHCHEV

MAY I HUMBLY APPEAL FOR YOUR FURTHER HELP IN LOWERING THE TEMPERATURE DESPITE THE WORSENING SITUATION. YOUR CONTINUED FORBEARANCE IS OUR GREAT HOPE. WITH MY HIGH REGARDS AND SINCERE THANKS.

In the middle of the crisis Lord Russell also prepared a leaflet, called *YOU ARE TO DIE* (quoted below). It was printed (*Observer*, November 4th) by the Cuban Embassy in London at its own, presumably non-partisan, expense. Observers could only conclude that Lord Russell and his group had moved very far from their original position in the Ban-the-Bomb campaign. Was anybody any longer quite certain whether the marches and demonstrations were in favour of Cuba's right to the bomb or against

nuclear war? Some of the most vocal protestants and demonstrators certainly created the impression that they would rather have the world blown up than have a single hair of Castro's beard singed.

In the very beginning the Ban-the-Bomb campaign had been just what it said. Lord Russell had, of course, been quite right in his acute realisation of the horrors of atomic war, and probably also correct in his assumption that the world may be heading for a catastrophe unless the present deterrent—the balance of power—is gradually replaced by disarmament based on a new international order. Some of those who refuse to listen to him may well be opposing him for "the wrong reasons," namely through lack of imagination. But a theoretical statement of principles obviously did not suffice. The Committee of 100 (as well as the CND and similar groups abroad) had to think about "practical ways and means" for the realisation of their aims. Hence their decision to opt, as a group, for "neutralism." For many of its members this was not much of a turning-point since they had been neutralists anyway. But as it subsequently transpired, neutralism was only a half-way house; critics felt that the movement came to show far more sympathetic understanding for the one side than for the other in the global conflict. Having made their basic decision, they were drawn into the whirlpool of world affairs and were caught up in various issues (e.g., opposition to the Common Market) which had little if anything to do with "the preservation of world peace." They also attracted a fringe group around them which, by its antics, shaped to a large extent the image of the movement in the public eye. It was all very well to complain of the "smears of Fleet Street," but was it fair to blame reporters for noting the bohemian flamboyance of the nuclear disarmers?

Anti-Americanism gradually became an end in itself. They preached "sanity" and "neutralism," yet what did they practise during the crisis? A sane policy would have demanded, above all, limiting the new conflict and preventing its further spread. But Lord Russell evidently found nothing wrong with the establishment of missiles in Cuba:

I asked Lord Russell to comment on President Kennedy's reference to "burglars" in his reply. "It is quite ridiculous," was Lord Russell's unequivocal response, "he is the burglar because Cuba was threatened and she sought protection." (*Daily Worker* interview, October 29th.)

The "protection" of Cuba by nuclear missiles thus became more important than the cause of world peace.

A truly neutral attitude would have demanded

\* But an Irish letter-writer to the *Guardian* (November 3rd) could not help recalling the words of Brave Slattery who had also retreated to the Irish Sea:

*Then up spoke Noble Slattery  
And thus addressed his men,  
I'm not as bold as a lion,  
But I'm braver than a hen,  
And he that fights and runs away  
Will live to fight again.*

7a

careful weighing of the evidence during the period of the crisis, but all that *Sanity* (the organ of the CND) did was to compare the serial photographs of the missile sites to the latest action paintings from Paris, to denounce the CIA, and to find excuses for Fidel Castro. Lord Russell dismissed the evidence out of hand:

I don't accept them [the photographs] as evidence because they were taken by an interested party. (*Daily Worker* interview, October 29th.)

The Soviet statements he accepted unquestioningly; the Soviet Union, apparently, was not an interested party.

ON SATURDAY, October 27th, several London newspaper offices received a communication from Misses Pat Arrowmith and Wendy Buttlin who had been among the most active members of the Committee of 100. It denied the report that they had been on holiday during the Cuban crisis:

It seemed to us that nothing useful could be achieved by ordinary people within twenty-four hours to avert this event [the clash between Soviet missile-carrying ships and the U.S. blockade]. We decided therefore to go as swiftly as possible to a place where we could possibly survive a nuclear war—the west coast of Ireland.

Nobody could deny it was an honest statement.\*

The first Soviet ship, an oil tanker, was stopped on Friday, October 26th, and then allowed through the blockade. Work on the missile ramps continued and in Washington "further measures" were being contemplated. Messrs. Stevenson and Zorin clashed in the Security Council. Khrushchev accepted U Thant's appeal, and Kennedy also indicated willingness to enter negotiations.

Sixty girls at the Glanmor (Swansea) Grammar School staged a protest walk-out against the blockade. Three students at Swansea Teachers' College were on hunger strike until President Kennedy agreed to meet Khrushchev. The National Assembly of British Women led by Councillor Peggy Middleton (of Greenwich) sent a cable to Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy: "BRITISH WOMEN ENJOIN YOU INFLUENCE YOUR HUSBAND LIFT CUBAN BLOCKADE NEGOTIATE PEACE." Mr. Otway McCannell (Moor Park, Farnham, Surrey) in the *Herald*: "How dare our Foreign Secretary pledge our support for this American outrage?" Brian Osborne, in the *Times*: "Sir, President Kennedy's yesternight's speech brings a refreshing breeze of simplicity into international politics. If the U.S. has missile-launching bases at home or abroad, that is good. If another nation does it, it is bad."

Mr. Richard Crossman, in his weekly *Guardian* column, volunteered to exorcise Kennedy as quickly as possible from the mess. He compared Kennedy's action with Sir Anthony Eden's at Suez, thought that Kennedy wanted to impress the American voters, and felt certain that Mr. Khrushchev has already won a "priceless advantage." The only "cheerful aspect": "The refusal of the British press to swallow our official propaganda." Lord Lambton (in the *Evening Standard*) also feared that Kennedy had walked into a trap (the real

danger was in India, not Cuba). The *Guardian* continued to press for the dismantling of Turkish bases as an obvious way out: "From such an arrangement the Russians would gain the removal of the threat geographically closest to them. The Americans would gain the same." The *Times* remarked that

Comparisons between the Cuban and Turkish bases are horly and quite rightly resented by most Americans. The history and the whole context are indeed difficult. Even so a case can be made for banishing offensive missiles from each base.

The *Worker* denounced those

who wonder why the Cubans won't agree to proposals for "inspection" (i.e., spying) or to the U.S. demands that the weapons they regard as necessary for their defence should be withdrawn.

**O**N FRIDAY most of the weeklies are published. *Tribune* had a banner headline: THE WAR CRIMINALS. It did not believe for a moment the allegations about Cuban missile bases:

I would be willing to lay a large amount of money that President Kennedy's discovery of Russian rockets is in the same category as Mr. Thorncroft's "sensational disclosure" [of Russian arms in the Middle East during Suez].

*Tribune* goes on to compare Kennedy with the German Fuehrer and says that a pretext is needed for every invasion. But it also offers yet another explanation of Kennedy's motives:

Election fever is rising in the United States. It may well be that Kennedy is risking blowing the world to hell in order to sweep a few Democrats into office....

*Tribune* went on:

<sup>7</sup> According to an article by George Gallup in the *Herald Tribune* (November 12th), written after the Democratic electoral victory on Tuesday, November 6th, "The Cuban crisis did not have any real effect in changing votes. A Gallup Poll in early October—before the President's decision to quarantine Cuba—showed that an election at that time would have produced much the same results as actually did occur."

<sup>8</sup> Khrushchev had indeed said (at the Baltic port of Szczecin, July 17th, 1959): "It is vital that the Baltic becomes a sea of peace. The Soviet Union has no ground for differences with her Baltic neighbours... and I hope they will do everything to prevent their countries from becoming bases for nuclear weapons." But the parallel with nuclear weapons in the Caribbean, the *Sunday Telegraph* observed on October 28th, would probably be rejected: "Autres temps, autres mers."

<sup>9</sup> The *New Statesman's* monolithic "British opinion" was in point of fact somewhat less so. An *Observer* writer said (October 28th): "Most non-Americans have taken the position for two years now that Americans were making the Castro molehill into a mountain and fools of themselves. We should now admit that on at least four important points events have proved us wrong...."

No British Prime Minister, we trust, not even the present one, would order the turning out of the Palace Guard on evidence from so unreliable a source as the CIA... If they [the missiles] are being installed... then it may be assumed that Khrushchev has taken leave of his senses and has completely abandoned the military policies which he has been at such pains to defend and define.<sup>10</sup>

A reader could not help being struck by the *Tribune* account of the Soviet missile bases as compared with the one given in the satirical weekly *Private Eye*:

To the ordinary peace-loving reader it may look just like an ordinary clump of trees in any old field. Which, of course, is what it is. But the trained observer looks beyond the simple peace-loving blades of grass, the few freedom-hungry sheep. For when this picture is blown up 24,000 times it shows nothing less than an enormous underground missile site. On nest racks lie hundreds of nuclear missiles, each one carefully labelled with the name of an individual American city and the words "Made in Russia."

*Private Eye* is a funny paper; *Tribune* is not.

The *New Statesman* that week, reflecting its new political eclecticism, had something for everybody. It denounced President Kennedy's "irresponsible warmongering." Both Lord Russell and Kingsley Martin argued that West Berlin could not and should not be defended. The front-page editorial saw some mitigating circumstances for Kennedy: "Assuming" the photographs are authentic, "the Russians stand accused of an act of provocation unprecedented since the onset of the Cold War." But the *Statesmen's* political correspondent, conveniently exaggerating, said that in British opinion, the American attitude to Cuba

has always seemed a mixture of the hysterical, the petulant, and the absurd, and there could hardly be a worse cause for a British government to have to uphold.<sup>11</sup>

He regretted that the Labour Party statement was not more strongly anti-American. Mr. Karl Meyer, the paper's Washington correspondent, was even unwilling to credit the realistic drama of the events and reported that in the capital one had the feeling that a

bad Allan Drury novel is enacted in life, and that all the characters are acting to form—like clock-work manikins.

Mr. Peter Nine Worsthorne, on assignment for the *Sunday Telegraph*, found the Washington atmosphere rather more Shakespearean and found room in his dispatch for allusion to *Henry V*: ("Gentlemen in England, now abed...."). Shakespearean surely was the atmosphere in London where an ultra-sensitive *Guardian* reporter, attending a performance of *Troilus and Cressida* at the Aldwych Theatre ("with invasion and bombing in the headlines 'outside'"), registered a "deepening hush" at the lines:

Then everything includes itself in power,  
Power into will, will into appetite;

*And appetite, as universal wolf,  
So doubtless seconded with will and power,  
Must make perfuse an universal prey,  
And last eat up himself....*

"Too close for comfort," a woman is said to have said as she brushed past him at the end, making for the exit and the late news bulletin.

The *Satirist*, also published on Friday, could only note prosily that it is

on occasions like these that anti-American lunacy flourishes. Those who assume the impossible worst on every occasion have already started their ululations.

**SATURDAY**, October 27th: "U.S. THREATENS NEW MOVE AGAINST CUBA... MISSILE BUILD-UP GOES AHEAD 'RAPIDLY,' TALK OF A NUCLEAR ATTACK, INVASION THREAT AS RUSSIANS RACE TO COMPLETE BASES." Mr. Harold Wilson said at Durham that it was essential to avoid anti-American fever or a wave of war-hysteria of the "blow-them-out-of-the-water" type. Both he and Mr. Gaitskell regretted that the U.S. should have reacted in the way it had; he thought it should have taken the matter to the United Nations. In Walsall, twelve-year-old Tanya Brayford got 75 signatures from schoolmates for a petition to Kennedy to "stop taking desperate action...." Lord Russell wrote: "You are going to die because rich Americans dislike the government Cubans prefer. Do not yield to ferocious and insane murderers." The Rev. T. N. Bush (the Cathedral School, Llandaff, Cardiff). "Official government statements on Cuba together with the pathetic hymns of hate against Russia spewed on Radio and TV by Lord Home, surely underline the vital need for a General Election" (*Herald*). A Leicester University student, 21-year-old Ian Mandleberg, on a hunger strike against the blockade, had not had anything to eat or drink for forty hours. Protest marches, "Hands Off Cuba" committees at London, Durham, Liverpool, Leeds, and Oxford Universities. John Gollan, Secretary-General of the Communist Party:

[The world] will not be brought back from the brink until Kennedy is forced to call off the blockade... evidence of alleged nuclear missiles hurriedly produced by the notorious gangster CIA and swallowed whole by Macmillan and Gaitskell (*Worker*).

The *Guardian* editorial that morning was called "When to Break Ranks":

The words coming out of the State and Defence Departments have an ominous ring. They suggest that if the Russians do not at least stop work at the missile sites with the existing equipment bombing or invasion may begin.... If it does come to that the British Government should make it clear that it must vote against the United States in the United Nations, just as the Americans voted against us at Suez. There are times when ranks must be broken if the cause that unites them is not to become meaningless.

The *Economist*, in its editorial, "Cyclone Cuba," worried about the implications of "victory":

Some Americans, but we hope not Mr. Kennedy, may be tempted to interpret these developments in what could well be a dangerously wrong way. They may be persuaded that by forcing a show-down over the shipment of Russian arms to Cuba the United States has publicly and triumphantly made Mr. Khrushchev back down, in other words, that the U.S. have achieved that decisive victory in the "contest of will".... the theory that represents Mr. Khrushchev as needing only to be convinced of American willingness to go to war, and he then will negotiate in earnest is too facile.

Professor J. B. Conacher, an historian from the University of Toronto, wrote to *The Times*:

... This present English detachment reminds me in some ways of American isolationism of the nineteen-thirties. In what other country, I wonder, would the reaction to this new danger threatening an ally take the form of publishing maps and cartoons pointing out the supposed similarity between American bases in Turkey and Russian bases in Cuba? This attempt to govern the cold war by the fair play rules that will serve on the playing fields of Eton is surely unrealistic and will only encourage the Russians.... Surely, Sir, at this grave moment, it is absurd and unjust to suggest that he [Kennedy] is merely playing a game of domestic politics. I do not believe that the people who raise these suspicions speak for England.

**SUNDAY**, October 28th: KENNEDY REJECTS RUSSIA'S "CUBA FOR TURKEY" DEAL, SAYS "REMOVE BASES FIRST" (*Sunday Times*). "Time is running out rapidly before a show-down" (Henry Brandon from Washington).

In "A Chance to Save the World," the Sunday reader of the *Observer* found:

The chief blame... lies clearly with Russia.... An American demand for a standstill in Cuba would be justified and the Russians should be prepared to accept UN inspectors to prove it. But an invasion of Cuba now would be madness.... For the United States, too, must share some of the blame for the present situation.... Ever since the Russians developed atomic weapons, the Americans have consistently tried to over-insure against risk, to tilt the balance even further on their side.... Is it really insulting to suggest that the U.S. should give up her missile bases in Turkey as Mr. Khrushchev has now proposed?... He (President Kennedy) himself has shown courage in the highest degree. But the greatest courage and the greatest self-sacrifice may be for the Americans to give up their emotional longing to "win" the Cold War... which led even Mr. Adlai Stevenson last week to talk nonsense about a "world civil war."

Writing in the *Sunday Times*, Mr. Michael Howard (Reader in War Studies at the University of London) noted, "Strategists may explain the Rus-

sian action and connoisseurs of Machiavellian policy admire it; but there will be few to describe it as wise." From "Where We Must Stand" (*Sunday Telegraph*):

How well one knows the arguments, how chilling to pursue the parallels with another crisis 25 years ago... the face of appeasement is now Lord Russell's, but the clothes are Mr. Chamberlain's.

As for the Cuban-Turkish deal, it was one "every schoolboy would reject." If the Cuban sites were rendered harmless at once, one could then negotiate the withdrawal from Cuba and other Russian bases and from Turkey and other American bases.

On Sunday afternoon at four o'clock, London time, Khrushchev's letter announcing the unconditional removal of missile sites from Cuba was made public. In it the Soviet leader even expressed some of the "sympathy and understanding" that had been so conspicuously absent from so much London press opinion—"I understand very well your anxiety and the anxiety of the people of the United States in connection with the fact that the weapons... are in fact grim weapons. Both you and I understand what kind of weapons they are..." Writing a week later, the *Sunday Times* (November 4th) argued:

Last week-end in its leading article the *Sunday Times* argued that the Cuba crisis should be settled by negotiation, that the Cuba-Turkey offer was worth considering, and that the U.S. would not be justified in invading Cuba after that offer had been made.... By Sunday afternoon this had partly been overtaken by events.... A few readers have written with the advantage of hindsight—to ask if we withdraw the leader. We do not....

"Mr. Khrushchev's latest message will be received everywhere with deep relief," the *Telegraph* wrote on Monday morning:

It is by this attitude (not stating pre-conditions)... that Mr. K. merits the President's epithet of "statesmanlike." For there is in the Soviet leader's message a sign of something that can alone reduce tension between East and West: trust.

*The Times* was somewhat more sceptical:

Not Mr. Kennedy's conditional promise but other considerations must really have swayed him.... In a sense it is Nikita Sergeyevich asserting himself against Mr. Khrushchev, the prudent peasant against the bouncing leader.

*The Guardian* also expressed "profound thankfulness," but added somewhat cryptically, somewhat ominously: "time has been won at a price which will not be known for some time yet." The paper was also very much concerned about Mr. Khrushchev's political future:

Conceivably, after such an apparent reverse, Mr. Khrushchev will lose his place at the head of the Soviet government. If so, we shall probably not be any better off....

7a

Dismantled in Cuba, would the Russians now seek revenge in Berlin?

If Russia had found the Americans soft in Cuba [wrote the *Express*] she would have been all the more encouraged to press forward in Berlin.

Mr. John Gollan, the C.P. General Secretary, announced that "Khrushchev's sanity and public pressure have won the first round." But, says the *Worker's* editorial, the anti-American struggle has to be stepped up, "for the warmongering maniacs in the U.S. are unfortunately in powerful positions. Like wolves whose prey has been snatched from their jaws, they will become more vicious than ever..."

The *Mirror* praised both Kennedy's and Khrushchev's statesmanship. The *Mail* was also moved to write, "We should join with President Kennedy in praising Khrushchev's statesmanship."

We should also admire his courage.... Our view that Mr. Kennedy's new-found determination will help the West in Berlin is strengthened by the dramatic turn in Cuba. We have all been near enough to hell to smell the brimstone. It is for the world's leaders to make sure there will be no return.

**WHEN THE WORST** was over, there was time for more specialised scrutiny. At the telescope was an American professor (Louis J. Halle), who elegantly forgave his British cousins in perhaps the most generous piece of prose the week had produced (*Times*, November 2nd):

Throughout the generations in which England bore the prime responsibility for defending our common civilisation, we Americans remained unaware of our dependence on British sea-power and, as detached spectators, enjoyed the luxury of lecturing the British on proper international behaviour. We scolded them for their indulgence in power politics, we raised our hands in horror when they worked for a "balance of power," and we admonished them to emulate the high idealism with which we conducted our affairs.

Now that the prime responsibility has passed from the English to us the position is reversed. For fifteen years the spokesmen of India, raised like the rest of us on Anglo-Saxon idealism, have lectured us Americans on morality and the wickedness of power politics. Increasingly the English have been succumbing to the same indulgence. We were never so be-lectured.... Even when [the British press] granted that Washington had been justified in what it did to frustrate Moscow's attempted coup in Cuba [it] felt it necessary to remind those Americans that they were not yet purged of their iniquity, and to warn them that they were still expected to be on their good behaviour.

This pharisaism, which belongs to all Anglo-Saxondom, is irresponsible because it is based on the world as it should be, while responsibility has to be discharged in the world as it is. Moreover, it has one implication which, in the present circumstances, I find unjustifiable: that President

Kennedy and his advisers have less understanding of international realities and are less aware of moral considerations than those who feel it their duty to lecture them.

I do not ask that criticism of American policy and American behaviour be bridled. It is indispensable, and I would have it as freely practised in England as in America itself. I ask merely that it be conceived as criticism among fellow-men who are essentially equal in the limitations of their common humanity, rather than as the instruction of irresponsible children by those who know best.

At the microscopes again were the Kremlinologists from whom almost nothing had been heard. True, Marvin Kalb had actually found a man in Moscow who would speak frankly with him (*Sunday Times*, November 4th):

As one highly sophisticated Russian, who certainly does not reflect the average Soviet viewpoint, told me to-day: "Stand firm on Cuba, and you will hold on to Berlin. Permit yourself the luxury of back-tracking, however slightly, and you will get real trouble in Berlin."

Somewhat less sophisticated, but almost equally unprecedented and even incredible, was the Russian who was cornered by another foreign correspondent in Moscow (David Miller, *Herald-Tribune*, October 30th):

A ranking Soviet military figure said to-night that the Soviet Union is prepared to settle the Cuban crisis without tying in the demands of Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro. . . . The figure, whose name cannot be disclosed, told Western reporters at a diplomatic reception that Premier Khrushchev's proposed swap of Soviet rockets in Cuba for American rockets in Turkey had been abandoned because of President Kennedy's stiff response.

He did say, however, that if the United States had launched military operations against Cuba an "inevitable" Soviet military response would have followed. He added that, in his opinion, the Soviet Union had believed an invasion possible, but had been taken by surprise by the quarantine.

The Soviet Union, he went on to say, had agreed to dismantle its bases in Cuba because of Mr. Kennedy's firmness in the face of a Soviet arms build-up within striking distance of the Americas. . . . The Soviet source said that the settlement of the Cuban situation cleared the atmosphere for negotiations on other pressing issues, but said the question of Berlin was entirely separate. The source said that Mr. Khrushchev had dispatched First Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov to the United Nations to negotiate Soviet arms-withdrawal terms in such haste because the situation was dangerous and something had to be done in a hurry.

Asked about Mr. Castro's call for a United States withdrawal from its Guantanamo base, the source merely shrugged and responded that Mr. Castro would probably have to accommodate

himself to the arrangement made between Moscow and Washington. . . .

But what of that "secret letter"? According to the *Observer* (November 4th):

The text of Khrushchev's message to the President on Friday night is still secret. It is said not to have been published by the Americans because of its violent and vituperative language. . . .

Rowland Evans in Washington suggested something quite different: (*Herald-Tribune*, November 2nd):

So astonishing was the note—its emotional content, not its proposals—that the few officials who have read it are under strict orders to preserve its secrecy. It will not be published in the foreseeable future if ever. The reason is that it revealed the Soviet leader in an unnatural fever of excitement and dismay over the prospect that Mr. Kennedy's determination to dismantle the missile bases in Cuba might actually lead the world into nuclear war. . . . The letter arrived at the White House on Friday night, October 26th, but its receipt wasn't disclosed until twenty-four hours later when Mr. Kennedy answered it. In the interim—and this is one of the most puzzling aspects of Mr. Khrushchev's conduct—a second proposal came from Moscow. . . . The first letter, revealing the Soviet Premier in his extreme state of agitation, was never released in Moscow. The second, imposing the new condition [withdrawal from Turkey] was immediately broadcast by Radio Moscow. In his reply of October 27th the President all but ignored the second letter. . . .

Informed sources described the first letter as long, somewhat rambling, disjointed, and confused; a letter lacking any of the nice touches of diplomatic language. . . . According to those who have studied it, it was a high-pitched emotional appeal from a man who suddenly saw the world perched on the precipice of atomic war, and was quite frankly fearful of what might ensue. . . .

As for the refusal to make the letter public, it reflected Washington's "concern that it might be used by the old hard-line Stalinists against Mr. Khrushchev. . . ."

THIS PUT THE PROBLEM squarely into the laps of the old-time Kremlinologists, and Mr. Victor Zorza, a senior of the club, was to be found characteristically engaged in mind-reading between the lines (*Guardian*, November 3rd):

it is conceivable that the acceptance of Mr. Kennedy's terms by Mr. Khrushchev had not been cleared with all his associates. The attempt on Saturday to put stiffer terms to the Americans could well have been the result of pressure from those Soviet leaders who thought that Mr. Khrushchev had given way too readily. There is even some ground for speculation that Mr. Khrushchev, having been outvoted by his immediate associates in the Praesidium, who prevailed on him to send the letter about the Turkey-Cuba deal, then appealed to the full Central Committee of the Soviet Communist

Party, which endorsed his own line, so that on Sunday Mr. Khrushchev was able to return to the terms he had outlined to Mr. Kennedy in the "secret letter."

The grounds for this speculation are provided in a seemingly routine article in Wednesday's *Pravda* by a group of "Old Bolsheviks"—a device that has been used during past crises to convey important information between the lines.... The claim here that the decisions were "taken" by the Central Committee can hardly be a figure of speech, and it implies that a quorum was hastily convened by bringing into Moscow those of its members who could be readily reached—and, perhaps, who could be relied upon to endorse Mr. Khrushchev's line.

Only once before has Mr. Khrushchev appealed to the Central Committee over the heads of his immediate associates in the Presidium. That was in June, 1957, when the Presidium majority grouped around Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich had voted him out of the post of First Party Secretary. On that occasion Mr. Khrushchev was helped by Marshal Zhukov, then the Minister of Defence, who arranged with the Air Force the immediate conveyance of Central Committee members to Moscow.

Mr. Khrushchev then got his Central Committee majority, and, if one's reading of the signs is correct, he would appear to have got it now....

The official Washington "demonologists" were evidently faced with the same puzzle, for in the full minute-by-minute reconstruction of the Cuban crisis by the huge and well-informed staff of the *New York Times* (November 6th), there is this:

Which proposal was genuine and which inherited a reply? The second letter was markedly different in tone and style from the previous Khrushchev communication. Had the Premier been overruled? Was he raising the ante? Or was he applying pressure by demanding a higher price if his private proposal was rejected? These were the questions before the [President's] committee....

Only the astute Mr. Max Freedman reported the background to this fascinating and fateful letter. On October 30th he wrote from Washington:

It has become known that President Kennedy sent a stern private letter to Mr. Khrushchev on Thursday warning him of the tremendous hazards which faced world peace, and the safety of the Soviet Union itself, if no speedy settlement of the Cuban crisis could be arranged.

It was Mr. Khrushchev's reply to this message which led to the hope of a settlement over the week-end. The clearest explanation of what happened in the last few days has been given by one of the men who played a decisive role as a constant adviser to President Kennedy during the worst days of the crisis.

<sup>10</sup> "Complete accuracy"? It was later divulged by the Defence Department that nuclear action had not in fact been considered and that the report was confided to the press for purposes of "psychological warfare."

He said that the technique followed by President Kennedy over the week-end could be summarised in these terms: a select group of reporters known to be friends of the President were given information which allowed them to write, with complete accuracy,<sup>10</sup> that the United States late Friday night was considering armed action, including the possible use of nuclear bombs.

The next day the White House sent a Note to Mr. Khrushchev which was a masterpiece of diplomacy. In effect it ignored the Saturday message or treated it as a minor irrelevancy intended for bargaining. On Saturday Mr. Khrushchev suddenly suggested that the crisis be solved by trading the Turkish bases for the Cuban bases. What seemed to the world—which knew nothing of Friday's message—as a harsh statement of impossible American conditions was really nothing of the sort. It was in reality a summary and paraphrase of the proposals which Mr. Khrushchev himself had made on Friday night....

But where Washington was involved in Anglo-Saxon political empiricism, London was engaged in flights of ideological metaphysics:

Mr. Heath himself seized the attention of the House with a whole series of fascinating queries as to what the Russians had been up to in the Caribbean.

Had they been trying to put themselves in a position to negotiate from greater strength? Was it all intended as a lever for Berlin? Was there an internal power group working against Mr. K.'s peaceful co-existence line? Had the Soviet been seriously misinformed about Western aims and Western determination? Had they been taking the anti-nuclear demonstrators too seriously? Did they think quite simply that the Americans would not notice? Did they reckon it a safe risk from which they could withdraw if need be?

Or—the most remarkable speculation of all, it seemed—did Mr. Gromyko really believe the installations to be defensive, when the armed forces had in fact made them offensive?

The *Guardian's* Parliamentary Correspondent continued (November 19):

There might have been other questions, but these were enough to be going on with. Here was a rich field of speculation indeed, and we all sat back to hear the lines along which the Lord Privy Seal's thoughts were working: for everyone was agreed that the vital thing was to learn the right lessons from the Cuban course in applied brinkmanship, and it was hard to see how any reliable lessons could be learned unless we had some authoritative working theory of how the whole thing came about....

THESE WERE MORE second thoughts to follow. Mr. Walter Lippmann announced that at least some of his anxiety had been unfounded, since President Kennedy (unlike Wilson, Roosevelt, Truman) "kept open the channel of diplomatic communication" at the height of the crisis. His suggestion for a Cuba-Turkey exchange was now forgotten. It had apparently infuriated the State Department who thought

the Russians would interpret it as official kite-flying" (*Observer*, November 4th), and the Russians in fact did, for it was mentioned by Khrushchev in one of his communications.

Mr. Philip Toynbee, who had written to *The Times* protesting against American actions now expressed his disgust at the "wanton act of aggression committed by Russia in Cuba."<sup>11</sup> Lord Altringham, too, thought he had been "too harsh" about President Kennedy. Mr. Joseph Alsop, who had written about the "lunacy" of action in Cuba, now headed his first post-Cuban column "Victory!" Others, though pleased about the final "outbreak of peace," opined that "defeat" might be closer to the truth, for the result, as Mr. Harold Wilson (always an imaginative man with balances) concluded, was perhaps "just what Khrushchev had intended it to be...." *The Guardian* now (November 9th) pooh-poohed Soviet attempts to save face, "trying to present as a victory, or rather as a tie, what everyone knows to be a defeat...." *The Guardian's* Washington correspondent, Mr. Max Freedman, had already made quasi-editorial amends for "ranks-breaking" by writing (November 1st):

All the risks which he [President Kennedy] took in the past few days were risks for peace,

<sup>11</sup> In the New York *Herald-Tribune* (European edition, November 3rd), Mr. Toynbee confessed: "From midnight on the Monday of President Kennedy's speech announcing the blockade of Cuba, until Wednesday morning, I believed, and said, that the blockade was a monstrous and cold-blooded election stunt; that there were no Russian missiles on Cuba, and that the physical invasion of Cuba was the next step in this wicked United States plot. By Wednesday I had judged, from Russian reactions to the crisis, that President Kennedy had told the literal truth about the Russian rocket sites; and I was forced to make an immediate volte-face.... Being a unilateralist disarmer of the most extreme type, I was outraged by the extension of nuclear arms and nuclear tension into a new area."

<sup>12</sup> The only public wobble, be it recorded, was tangled in the Byzantine intricacies of the *Guardian*'s office, where one of its writers had to write a letter to the Manchester editor to disengage himself from the imputation by a London editor that he was an authoritative source for said wobble. "I am not sure," writes Wayland Young (*Guardian*, November 6th) "your London Letter is right in its interpretation of Michael Foot's article in *Tribune*, namely that he quotes me in support of the theory that on the worst night of the Cuba crisis Mr. Macmillan was considering how we could opt out. In any case, I had inside information. What I wrote was speculat[...]"

not incentives to war. If world opinion can appreciate that supreme fact, it will be able to judge American policy with fairness and with accuracy.

Freedman went on to say:

Senior officials of the Kennedy Administration are saying that the British Government was by any test the most helpful ally, and this fact will not soon be forgotten by those who have to make the major decisions for the United States.

American correspondents writing from London made a somewhat different estimate of the results of the "test," as in Mr. Joseph Fromm's harsh cable to *U.S. News & World Report* (Nov. 12th):

An American in London sometimes wonders whose side Britain is on. Among Britons who influence opinion and shape policy, the first reaction in the crisis was to justify Russia for putting missile bases in Cuba. These Britons were sceptical of U.S. charges against Russia, critical when U.S. didn't consult Britain or let the UK handle the whole crisis. Surprisingly few influential people saw establishment of Red missiles in Cuba as a challenge to the West, a threat to U.S. and therefore to Britain.

Fear of nuclear war explains much of this British attitude. In fact, this fear has given rise to some desire to contract out of the cold war in hope Britain might stand aside if U.S. and Russia come to blows. This is also true: the British believe in compromise. It was this spirit Hitler exploited at Munich. During the Cuban crisis, it appeared that many of Britain's most influential people have yet to learn the lesson of Munich. As a leading editor told this correspondent privately the other day: "The moral for America is this: Don't listen to Britain in a crisis."

The post-mortem by Sir William Hayter (in the *Observer*, November 11th) was less harsh than Fromm, less sanguine than Freedman, as befits a veteran of the diplomatic high-trapeze:

How do Anglo-American relations emerge from the squall? Not very well, I fear. The British Government seems to have behaved impeccably,<sup>13</sup> but the British public, or some of it, lost its head.... The two ladies who decamped to Western Ireland to avoid the bombs were wasting their time and money. These and other manifestations of British shakiness and weak nerves can hardly have seemed very impressive to the Americans.

Reporter